

## Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

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DCS Communications Office

**May 27, 2005**

### The Week Ahead

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**Mon., May 30** – Observance of Memorial Day holiday.

### Shelby County Foster Parent Reception

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*Submitted by Kenya Anderson, Recruitment Case Manager II, Memphis*



*Lori McKay and Bruce McKay, recipients of the Path to Excellence Award*

The Shelby County region held its annual foster parent banquet on May 19, 2005 at the Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church Fellowship Hall. This event is held during Foster Care Awareness Month in honor of Shelby County foster parents.

The collaborative efforts of the DCS staff and the following partner agencies helped to make this night a success: Agape Child and Family Services, Camelot Care Centers, Exceptional Needs Care Management Agency (ENCMA), Goodwill Homes, Miracle Alternatives Youth Services (MAYS), Mid-South Christian Services, Omni Visions, Inc., Phoenix Homes, Porter Leath Children's Center, Residential Care Inc., Therapeutic Foster Care (RCI), Senior Services and Youth Villages. We also had volunteers from the

Shelby County DCS recruitment team, foster home support and PATH unit ready to serve the 334 expected guests.

The evening was filled with wonderful entertainment from the Yo Memphis Show Choir, an interpretive dance and an original poem. The foster parents were honored with foster care reflections and encouraged to continue to open their homes to a child. There were many awards given to the selected honorees for excellence in the following categories:

**Excellence Award** – This is an all around excellent foster parent. This foster parent excels in meeting training requirements, is dependable and reliable. They work well in building trusting relationships with the children and departmental staff. This foster parent is active in the Foster Parent Association, is supportive of other foster parents, and embraces new foster and adoptive parents. They are knowledgeable and willing to volunteer their time if needed to promote the systemic continuity of care.

**Special Care Award** – This award is given to the foster parent who provides exceptional care for children with special needs. This foster parent is reliable, promotes teamwork by maintaining medical appointments, as well as maintaining contact with the case manager to meet the urgency of the child's needs while reducing the trauma to the child.

**Established Partner Award** – This foster parent has a focus on partnering with the department and other community agencies in order to enhance their abilities to provide care for the children. They are willing to go out into the community to represent foster parents and learn more about the vision of care for children in Tennessee. They have been a foster parent for several years and participate in public speaking on behalf of foster parents to support the unified purpose.

**Magnificent Mentor Award** – This foster parent is recognized for providing various mentoring skills to post-custody or independent living children. They are always available to mentor and offer supportive information that helps the children to understand complex or challenging life issues. They are the “go to” person who can handle the most challenging adolescent or teen. They are exceptional in motivating, encouraging and focusing on the best interest of the child.

With volunteers from each agency partner and under the supervision of recruitment team leader Tonni L. Chew and team coordinator Tawanna Leland, we worked together to create a beautiful evening with the stars. Regional administrator, Antionette Holman, gave a word of thanks as she concluded the program by thanking the foster parents for sharing their hearts, opening their homes to children and giving hope to families.

### **Continuous Quality Improvement – A Lesson on Total Quality**

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*Submitted by Semetta Pulley, Director 1, CQI/QA Division*

**“Stephen R. Covey’s philosophy for creating more meaningful relationships and successes in the workplace is one we should be striving to implement throughout**

**business and industry, in the home and elsewhere, if we expect to be rewarded with happiness and a fulfilling future. I truly believe that the values he stresses in *Principle-Centered Leadership* are fundamental to developing a total quality environment.” – Sam Walton, Chairman, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.**

The paradigm of “total quality” is continuous improvement. Quality begins with an understanding of our stakeholders’ needs and expectations, but ultimately it means meeting or exceeding those needs and expectations. Total quality implements essential principles and practices.

Total quality expresses the need for four continuous improvement principles:

- **Personal and Professional Development (trustworthiness).** In reality, each of us is a key to total quality. This approach often requires personal change – not personnel changes. This principle involves the creation of total quality people through ongoing character and skill development. Continuous improvement basically means you are not content with something being “half-right,” but also taking action to improve towards making it totally right – totally of quality.
- **Interpersonal relations (trust).** Total quality on an interpersonal level continually builds goodwill and negotiates in good faith, not in fear. This is where you build trust. If you create an expectation of continuous service improvement but fail to deliver on that expectation, you will see a build up of fear, thereby creating a lack of trust and negative forecasting.
- **Managerial Effectiveness (empowerment).** Managerial quality is the concept of nurturing the win-win performance and partnership agreements. Win-win thinking creates teamwork. Management’s job is empowerment – giving people principles, guidelines to work within, and resources to draw upon, thus empowering them to problem-solve at their level.
- **Organization Productivity (alignment).** The heart of real quality organizational continuous improvement is problem solving around stakeholder information. Quality is not always doing better; it can be doing things differently.

Total quality is rooted in the following timeless principles:

- Faith, hope, humility
- Works, industry, research, testing
- Constancy, consistency, predictability
- Continuous improvement and progression
- Feedback based on both measurement and discernment
- Virtue and truth in human relations

## **CQI Fervor in Southwest Region Quickly Spreading to All DCS Regions**

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*Submitted by W. Clay Crook, Acting CQI, SW Region*

This is a general alert for all DCS personnel. There is some sort of virus that is running through the Southwest region at an alarming rate. The symptoms vary. Some employees get excited and start speaking in acronyms. Others feel the compulsion to put up banners, flyers and posters, while others randomly chant mantras composed of three, four or five lines.

Our newest facility in Hardin County seems hardest hit with the contagion, with banners and signs all over the building. Outbreaks in resource, recruitment and foster home support are evident, as well as some individual case managers and administrative staff. Team leaders may show some signs of resistance, but I don't give them long.

Our regional administrator, Mildred Lawhorn, has had underlying symptoms of "Best Practice syndrome" for years, but after exposure to Commissioner Miller and Miss Bonnie, the condition has reached full stage "Path to Excellence." At the recent RA meeting, I noticed that the other RAs had symptoms as well.

If you see signs, banners or flyers with the following information, see people behaving in the following manner, or reciting these themes in groups, then you know the area has been infected with Path to Excellence. I'm listing the most common strains, but you may see variations:

### **Three DCS Core Values of Best Practice**

Family Focused  
Strength Based  
Culturally Sensitive

### **Four Basic Principles of Professional Behavior**

Preserve the integrity of others  
Practice active listening  
Engage others in problem solving  
Take responsibility for your behavior

### **Five Overarching Themes**

Safety  
Permanency  
Well-Being  
Transition to Adult Living  
Resource Linkage

Advice for most contagions is isolation and bed rest, but in this case, the symptoms seem to ease with hard work and group activities.

## **The Coach, The Mentor, The Supervisor ... A Winning Combination**

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*Submitted by Valerie J. Handy, M.S., Program Manager, Training Division*

If you would, take a walk with me down memory lane to when you first came to work as a case manager for DCS or, for some of you, DHS. You got your first cases. How prepared did you feel? How much training did you receive? Did you get to “practice” with real live families under the guidance of a more seasoned worker before going out on your own? The answers to these questions vary; however, the overwhelming response is usually “very little training” and a sense of just being “thrown out there”. The word “unsupported” comes to mind.

### **Coaching**

Never before has this department offered such in-depth support to new hires. Today, new hires are afforded the opportunity to practice the skills that they learn in the classroom under the guidance of an OJT (on-the-job) coach. It is the job of the OJT coach to point out strengths and weaknesses, offer support and encouragement, model behavior and expectations of the organization, and help identify and assist in setting goals for the person new to DCS. Now that case managers are to be certified, that OJT coach has the responsibility of assisting the new worker in doing well on competency assessments. To put it more succinctly, the job of the organizational coach is to motivate new staff to be outstanding performers, just as it is in the sports world. Cheers and anticipation of victory are few and far between for these “new players,” so it is the job of the OJT coach to cheer that new worker on in the midst of skepticism, negativity and self-doubt.

### **Mentoring**

While there are similarities between coaching and mentoring, the mentoring relationship should be more personal and lasting. It is perhaps the more influential of the two supporting relationships. While the coach is usually someone within the region, he or she may not be located in the same office as the new hire. The mentor is the one in the immediate office who has daily contact with the new employee. It is the mentor who will be around for a long while. The mentor knows all the inner workings of the office and the specifics of the job. Mentors take new workers under their wings and show them the ropes. The mentor knows how things run in the office – where to go and who to go to in order to get needs met. The mentor is aware of the specific office protocol and is invaluable in acclimating the new worker to the office environment. Classroom training may give the basics, the foundations, the mechanics of a job, but it is that hands-on experience with the mentor in the office where one learns the job.

### **Supervisors**

This group is by far the most influential because the nature of this work requires one to be a coach as well as a mentor. In a perfect world there would be no need for the other two components. The reality is that we are an organization driven by deadlines, staffing

issues, emergencies, bureaucracy, legislation and policy. The demands on supervisors are great and time is limited, but a good supervisor knows how important it is to build a relationship with not just their employee, but with the other support elements as well.

### **Assessors**

Although the involvement of this particular group is very time specific, they, too, provide a valuable service. These are volunteers who have been trained to assist in evaluating the skills of new workers as part of the certification process.

### **Be a part of the team**

It would be totally unrealistic to believe that any one person or group could be solely responsible for producing quality case managers. This is a tremendous undertaking and no single person can do it alone. We all are concerned about that “revolving door” when it comes to new staff coming and going. We may never be able to stop that door from turning, but perhaps with support for new staff, understanding their needs, and letting them know just how important they are to this organization, we may be able to slow that door down.

There is always a need for more mentors and assessors. This is the perfect opportunity to help someone who is now walking the path that you once traveled. You know what it is like. You know what it feels like.

## **FHACP Link – What Does It Do?**

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*Submitted by Jimmy Lichtenstein, Director, Systems Development and Enhancements*

After many meetings and a great deal of participation from all areas of DCS and vendors, the FHACP link has been implemented. Congratulations to all that worked on this project to get it to the stage ready for implementation.

The goal of the FHACP link, simply put, is to ensure that we’re placing Tennessee children in safe, approved foster homes. The process developed to help ensure the accuracy of this started with a mass data clean up. All of the data in the FHACP application was evaluated and worked to make sure it is as accurate as possible.

### ***So, what does it do anyway?***

The FHACP application tracks a series of critical dates related to foster homes. The application was upgraded to evaluate those dates for validity and also make sure we can create valid periods for which the home is considered to be approved. Based on that evaluation of dates, a process for checking those periods against placement dates is enacted. This process allows DCS to identify homes not considered to be approved prior to payment and allows for correction of the situation. Overall, this process will not only

help ensure the safety of the children, but will also make sure we are not paying homes that are not approved to take our children.

### ***What is the future of this link?***

Coming in the next TNKids major release are some very exciting changes to this link. The plan is to combine the functionality of the FHACP application and TNKids. This will allow staff to see a list of available approved homes in TNKids and assign placement at that time in a single system. This functionality will flow thru the system helping to relieve the workload after placement.

We are excited to continue to provide updated functionality and ease of use of systems now and continually in the future.

## **Core Leadership**

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**Core Leadership  
May 17, 2005  
Debra Valentine, presiding**

### **Celebration of Excellence**

Audrey Corder reported that a graduation ceremony was held for children in DCS custody on May 15, 2005. The ceremony celebrated 45 children who received their GED, or graduated from high school or college. The Commissioner acknowledged the hard work of Anidolee Chester Melville and her staff for putting together a first class event. The Commissioner would like to see more children attend next year and suggested having one ceremony per grand region next year.

### **Commissioner's Comments**

The Commissioner recognized Gwen Harris for involving our juvenile justice youth in the STARS program, which provides job training program at the Gaylord /Opryland Hotel. Ten youth started three months ago, but two graduated from the program this go-round. Participants are assigned a mentor and given job training. The two graduates have full-time jobs with full-time benefits and are paid \$8 an hour with two weeks of paid leave after a year.

Ken Steverson stated that the department is trying to expand this concept to include Dollar General. The Commissioner suggested also looking into Federal Express as an option.

### **Data**

The Commissioner felt like we are beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel regarding data. Rhonda Simpson, Petrina Jones-Jesz, Michael Price, and their staff have done a great job around one of our biggest challenges.

### **Internal Affairs**

Internal Affairs reported that routing is to be completed in 36 hours. It is unacceptable to keep it longer. Once report starts routing, it should be to Commissioner within 15-20 days. There is a difference in people who take action and people who review. The point person for the Internal Affairs reports will be the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner will be responsible to identify the correct person(s) to receive the reports for review. Once the document is received, the reviewer must document the time it was received and the time it was forwarded on. Reports concerning private providers need to be sent to Randal Lea, and reports that require personnel action need to include Tom Riche and William Haynes.

Two positions Internal Affairs have been added to the East region to focus on absconders.

The Commissioner would like a quarterly report spreadsheet that includes the number of special investigations unit, internal affairs and serious incident reporting issues and the nature (founded, unfounded) by region and agency. Debra Valentine would like Michael Price to bring the Web-based priority list to the next Core Leadership Team (CLT) meeting and discuss re-prioritizing the tracking system of the Office of the Inspector General.

### **Technical Assistance for Regional Implementation Plans**

The Commissioner felt like she would need the regional liaisons to assist in providing technical assistance. The current technical assistance liaisons for the regions are Bonnie Hommrich (Davidson and Upper Cumberland), Commissioner Miller (South Central and South East), Elizabeth Black (Northeast and Shelby), Judy Cole (East and Knox), Kent Berkley (Hamilton and Southwest) and Michelle Munson (Northwest and Mid-Cumberland). The Commissioner asked that CLT members check with their staff to identify what kind of technical assistance they can provide to the regions. This information needs to be sent to Eric Henderson.

### **Relative Caregivers Program Update**

Shalonda Cawthon provided documentation on the number and percentage of active custody children placed in a relative foster home. We need to be doing front-end diligent searches for relatives. The Commissioner stressed the need to get this information to the regions and ask if they need technical assistance in conducting front-end diligent searches, including “genograms.”

### **Contract Management Overview**



Patricia Sadler presented a handout on contract management, detailing how this process would take place. The periodic review would produce a major tool combining key items from stakeholders that need to be addressed every time someone goes to the provider. These items will be scored and combined in the first and second quarter reports. During the third quarter assessment decision would be made about the future of the provider contract.

### **Path to Excellence**

Bonnie Hommrich expressed concern that some domain work may be losing some momentum. We need domain worksheets the day before the meeting. Hommrich and Eric Henderson will be attending domain meetings. Domain leaders need to bring a document noting progress since the last report, including barriers, issues, etc. These reports will be due on the second CLT meeting of each month.

### **Community Services Agency (CSA) Update**

The legislation attaching CSAs to the Department of Finance and Administration (F&A) has been approved. Administrative has the most vacancies at this point.



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***Be true to your work, your word, and your friend.*** – Henry David Thoreau

***You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.*** – Indira Gandhi

***Experience is not what happens to you; it's what you do with what happens to you.*** – Aldous Huxley